

Mansion House  
214 East Main Street  
Centerville  
Wayne County

HABS No. IN-104

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IND,  
89-CENV1,  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service

Department of the Interior  
Washington, d.c. 20240

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# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MANSION HOUSE

HABS No. IN-104

Location: 214 East Main Street (U.S. 40), on the north side of the street, Centerville, Wayne County, Indiana.

Present Owner: Wayne County Historical Society, 1150 North "A" Street, Richmond, Indiana 47374.

Present Occupant: Historic Centerville.

Present Use: Museum.

Significance: This Federal style building is a fine example of an inn that serviced the old National Road.

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Sometime between 1836 and 1841, probably about 1840. The property sold in 1836 for \$220 but by 1841 the price had jumped to \$1600. The 1840 date is based on an advertisement of that year (Wayne County Record, December 30, 1840) which states that Henry Rowan, the owner, "has recently finished and is now occupying his commodious three story brick building on Main Street east of the Courthouse." (See Appendix I). There is, however, some discrepancy since Rowan did not purchase the property until 1841, but it may have been built by contract and only transferred in 1841.
2. Architect: None known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Mansion House occupies lot 59 of the original plat of Centerville. The following references are found in the Wayne County, Indiana Deed Books:
  - 1836 Deed of July 6, 1836, recorded in Book T, page 149. Rachael Neil sold the property to Martin Ray for \$220.
  - 1841 Deed of February 24, 1841, recorded in Book 21, page 159. Martin and Rachael Ray sold the property to Henry Rowan for \$1600. There is record of several mortgages taken out by Rowan and sale of parts of his land. In each case he later recovered the property.
  - 1852 Deed of May 1, 1852, recorded October 5, 1853, in Book 16, page 567. Henry and Jane Rowan sold lot 59 to the Indiana Central Railroad for \$2500. The property subsequently changed hands many times, coming finally to the Wayne County Historical Society in 1967.

1967 Deed of January 27, 1967, recorded in Book 332, page 46.  
Lola C. Beckett conveyed the property to the Wayne County  
Historical Society.

4. Original plans, construction: None known.
5. Alterations and additions: The function of the rooms in the Mansion House is not certain although the public rooms such as the bar or gaming rooms were almost certainly on the lower levels and the sleeping quarters upstairs. Originally there were probably three rooms across the front of the hotel on the second and third floors with no communication through the partition walls. One partition has been removed and a doorway cut between the remaining two rooms. On the street facade there is indication in the brickwork that a doorway on the right hand side has been removed. The width of the area of disturbed brick makes it clear this door would have been smaller than the existing door on the left bay of the facade. There was apparently also a door to the basement from the street opening at the current bulkhead on the south facade. The basement also was entered from the outside by a stairway from the east porch, but this stairway is now bricked over. On the exterior it appears that probably in the mid-19th century the roof was altered, wider overhanging eaves introduced and Italianate brackets added. The brick courses corbelled out at the top of the wall at the front and rear facades probably indicate the approximate configuration of the cornice.

The exterior west wall of the building clearly shows the trace of joists of a building now demolished. There is also a door on the west wall of the Mansions house which has been blocked but which at one point must have led to the structure to the west. The date of this structure is unknown but it must have been quite early since there is no record of it and it is already absent on the 1876 atlas of Wan Wayne County map of Centerville. It appears to have been a three story building.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Building:

1. Temperance Raids: There were raids on the Mansion House conducted by the people of Centerville. These are collected and recounted by Luther Feeger in Palladium Item (April 8, 1961, p. 12; April 11, 1969, p. 14) An attempt has been made to connect Cary Nation to these raids through one of her relatives who took part in the Centerville raids. The only architectural evidence of the temperance raid is the supposed destruction of the front door of the house by raiders' hatchets.

2. The National Road: The National Road was one of the great paths of westward migration in the United States. During most of the time between its completion in Indiana in 1834, until the time it was largely eclipsed by the railroads after the Civil War, the road brought hundreds of travelers past the Mansion House each month. There are still a number of these inns along the road including several in Centerville. For example, the American House Hotel at 100 West Main Street built in the 1830's is still extant. Other notable inns in the area include the Huddleston House in Mt. Auburn and the Vinto House in Cambridge City. The National Road enjoyed a revival of traffic in the automobile age, when it became U.S. 40, but since the construction of Interstate 70 it has again surrendered its position as the area's major east-west thoroughfare.

C. Sources of Information:

Huff, R.N. "Gleanings on Research on National Road Taverns and Mansion House in Particular" typewritten paper.

Feeger, Luther M. "Centerville Tavern, object of Raiders, was a popular place," Palladium Item, April 8, 1961, p. 12.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Centerville Women did a thorough job Wrecking Centerville Tavern," Palladium Item, April 11, 1969, p. 14.

Spahr, Walter, History of Centerville, Indiana, Richmond, 1966.  
Wayne County Record, December 30, 1840.

PART 11. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Information:

1. Architectural character: This building is a fine example of an early Federal style inn that served the old National Road, now U.S. 40.
2. Condition of fabric: Good. It has had a number of alterations.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Approximately 32'-6" wide (front) by 71'-6" deep (not including a deteriorating rear shed). There is a 3-1/2 story basic rectangle on the south with an attached 1 story rectangle on the north. There are 4 front bays. The plan shape is basically rectangular on the first floor.
2. Foundations: Rough ashlar stone on the south rectangle with cement parging on the exterior. The north rectangle has a brick foundation except for concrete on the west.

3. Wall construction, finish and color: Brick in Flemish bond on the south (front) facade with common header bond on all other walls. Bricks are 2-14" x 3-1/4" 8-1/4" and have flush joints 3/8" thick. The original orange red bricks are painted grey.
4. Structural system, framing: Basement exterior walls are stone with interior brick walls which support 2-1/2" x 10" joists spaced 18" on center, 1" x 5" decking over. Brick bearing walls above support joists and rafters.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: A three riser stoop on the west side of the basic rectangle has a hood with ornamental wood bracket supports that leads to an entrance hall door no longer in use. A corresponding stoop on the east wall has two risers. The one story porch on the east wall of the north rectangle has a concrete floor except for a segment of brick on the south that covers an old bulkhead. There are four partially turned columns, a plank ceiling and a shed roof with asphalt shingles. All wood is painted white.
6. Chimneys: One on the north side of the west wall and one on the south side of the east wall of the basic rectangle, all flush to the wall and with a metal flue cap on each. A third chimney is centrally located in the north rectangle.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance (south) has a shallow wood framed recess with a flush lintel, a deep wood transom ledge flush to the outside of the wood side frames and 2 paired ornamental brackets similar to the gable brackets flank each side of the transom. There is a glazed transom between. The wood door is further recessed and has one large upper light with 4 molded wood panels below in 2 tiers. The east and west stoops doors are recessed, and have glazed transoms. The wood door has two molded panels beneath a large glass light. Stone lintels and steps are painted grey and all wood is white.
  - b. Windows and shutters: The front first floor and the side second and third floor double hung windows have 4 (vertical) x 1 lights. Upper front double hung windows have 9 x 4 lights. Lintels are flush stone painted grey. The projecting stone sills, trim, and sash are painted white.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape and covering: The front gable runs east-west, the lower rear one at right angles. The roofing is asphalt shingle.

- b. Cornices, eaves: The eaves on the main (south) rectangle project at slightly less pitch than the main roof and have exposed rafters with a fascia board. The projecting gable ends are boxed and supported by single and clustered ornamental brackets. Barge and frieze boards are plain. Gutters and leaders are metal. All components are painted white.
- c. Dormers, cupolas and towers: None.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: There is a partial basement under the south part of the house. Access is from a stair in the first floor hall.
  - b. First floor: The side entrance hall and stairs are located in the S.W. corner. Doors open to two rooms on the east. A dining room with side porch is accessible from the rear of the two east rooms. A kitchen is north of the dining room.
  - c. Second floor: The stair hall leads to an east-west corridor with two bedrooms on the north side, a single large bedroom on the south and a toilet at the end. A fifth bedroom is south of the stair hall.
  - d. Third floor: Same as the second except for a storage room instead of a toilet.
  - e. Half story: The stairway terminates and a door opens to a narrow bedroom.
2. Stairways: The elegant open well main stair runs from entry hall to fourth (half) level in two unequal legs per run. The stair has an open stringer with simple brackets, turned balusters and an oval railing with a volute at the newel which consists of a cluster of balusters with a central newel post. The basement stair runs south under the main stair.
3. Flooring: Hardwood flooring 5-1/4" wide except for 3-1/4" at the kitchen and dining areas and 2-3/8" width in the first floor front room.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are plaster painted cream. The plaster ceiling are all white.

5. Doorways and doors: Most doors have 4 molded panels in 4 tiers. A transom is added on the second and third levels. Mostly architrave trim except in first floor front rooms and entry which have symmetrically molded trim with corner blocks. Doors and trim are painted white.
6. Special decorative features: Window trim in front room matches door trim. The first floor secondary bar room has a fireplace with turned columns flanking the opening and with an entablature and mantel over. The opening is closed. A recessed cabinet with similar detailing is just to the left.
7. Notable hardware: None.
8. Mechanical equipment: There is a warm air heating system and the electrical wiring is mostly concealed.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. General setting: The building faces south on tree lined U.S. 40 in an area that has a number of historically interesting structures. The neighborhood is predominantly residential but is well interspersed with increasingly commercial uses. There is a rear alley and an empty lot on the west that is part of the house site and used as a garden.
2. Historic landscape design: None.
3. Outbuildings: A three stall former garage with a shed roof in the rear had access from an east drive.

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E: Appendix I:

Adverstisement in the December 30, 1840 edition of the Wayne County Record:

"The subscriber, thankful for past favors, informs his friends and the public generally, that he has recently finished and is now occupying his commodious three story brick building on Main Street, east of the Courthouse where he is prepared to accomodate in good style, all those who may favor him with their custom.

From his superior means of accomodations and his experience in the business, he flatters himself that he will not only merit but receive a liberal share of public patronage.

His table will be well supplied with the best the country affords. His bar will be kept furnished with the choisest liquors and the house supplied with newspapers. His stables will constantly be well supplied with oats, corn and hay and attended by faithful hostlers.

He has just built, in addition to his other stables, a large carriage house. His old friends the traveling public are invited to give him a call . . . Henry Rowan."



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